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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Radio Service

OFFICE OF INFORMATION

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HOUSEKEEPER'S CHAT

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(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

ANNOUNCEMENT: "A Washington's Birthday Dinner." Information from Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. D. A.

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I must read you another letter today. This one is from a friend in Cresco, Iowa, who likes the radio cookbook, and wants more of it.

"Dear Aunt Sammy," she writes, "I love to cook, and I do enjoy making new things. Such remarks as these will be heard when a new dish appears upon the table: 'Well, I guess you have been listening-in this morning,' or -- 'Did you get this recipe from Aunt Sammy?' This doesn't bother me at all, and I go right on making new dishes. I have used a good many of your recipes and have never had a failure with any one yet."

That's all I'll read, from my friend in Cresco, Iowa. I want to remind her that laughter is an excellent aid to the digestion, so if the members of her family can joke about the radio recipes, so much the better. May save them from having dyspepsia.

This letter makes me think of one I got several weeks ago from a man whose wife made him copy all the recipes. He said he had almost written himself lame taking down radio recipes, and he wanted a cookbook right away. I sent him one, and hope he has received it long before this. I don't want to be responsible for an epidemic of writer's cramp among my friends' husbands.

Here's another letter, which contains a suggestion worth passing on. The letter is from a listener in Warehouse Point, Connecticut:

"Dear Aunt Sammy: I enjoyed your talk about prunes very much. We are very fond of prunes, and during the time that I have a fire overnight in the kitchen coal stove I bake them in the oven over night. Then they are all ready for breakfast. The slow cooking brings out the sweetness of the fruit, and I add no sugar. I use what water I think is needed, and cook the prunes in a covered dish."

Now <u>that</u> is a good idea. When prunes are baked slowly, in a heavy covered dish, the steam helps cook the fruit. Then, as my friend suggested, it is not necessary to add sugar, for it only hides the delicious flavor of the prunes.

Before I broadcast the menu for tomorrow, I must answer a question that is troubling a radio listener in Utah.

"Dear Aunt Sammy", she writes. "I wish you would help me out. I have set my heart on a pink taffeta evening dress, with a short bouffant skirt. A friend of mine, who has made a special study of clothing, says a taffeta dress with a full skirt would stand out like a balloon, and emphasize my size. If stout people can't wear stiff taffeta, can they wear soft satin?"

I don't want to be arbitrary about this question. Because if a stout woman is brave enough to follow Dame Fashion, she can wear taffeta, or satin, or bright plaids, or anything she pleases.

But it is true that the best-dressed stout women avoid shiny silks and rayons, or bright tinsel cloths. The reflected light from such shiny materials emphasizes all the curves the stout woman is trying to conceal. Your friend is right about the taffeta. Pink taffeta dresses, with short full skirts, are meant for the graceful young fashion-plate ladies who have slender hips.

I have a friend who is undeniably stout, yet she is always correctly dressed. The last time I saw her she was wearing a dress of a dull finish green crepe material. I admired the dress, and she told me she wears crepe materials because they have a certain amount of weight, and are softly clinging. The long straight shadows they produce give a feeling of length which she needs. She wears linens and ginghams too. Both of these materials take simple tailored lines well. Of course she is careful to select designs which are relatively small and inconspicuous. And she never wears <u>bright</u> colors, except in small areas.

"I <u>like</u> bright colors," she told me, "but they seem to increase my size. So I wear dark browns and blues, which make me look smaller, and the cool receding colors, in dull dark tones." The receding colors are those having blue, violet, and green tones. If the stout person enjoys bright or light colors, she can use such colors in small touches, to accent her costume. A scarf or bag or a string of gay beads will furnish the bright color.

Enough about clothes. Let's talk about the dinner we're preparing for the 22nd of February.

My first thought was that we should have an old-fashioned dinner, and serve the foods which our forefathers ate in early colonial times. But the more I studied over the matter, the more difficult it became. Take potatoes, for instance. Potatoes weren't much used by the early colonists, and some persons thought that a man who ate potatoes regularly for seven years, would surely die.

And tomatoes. In early colonial times tomatoes were either unknown, or used merely to decorate gardens. They were called "love apples", and were considered poisonous. And cherries -- oh yes, I know they had cherry trees -- but do you think they had canned cherries? No indeed. Women didn't begin to can fruit until the following century.

I decided finally to modify my colonial dinner, in accordance with modern tastes. Here's the menu: Fruit Cup; Roast Pork; Mashed Sweet Potatoes and Turnips; Canned String Beans; Cornbread; Applesauce or Cranberry Sauce; Revolution Salad; Cherry Pie; and Coffee.

The fruit cup is not really necessary. I don't suppose Marth Washington ever served a fruit cup as a first course at her festive dinners, but then perhaps she didn't know about it. A tasty fruit cup, made of grapefruit, oranges, and a big red cherry, will serve as an appetizing prelude to our Washington birthday dinner. It adds to the attractiveness of the table, too. I can close my eyes and see a table set with the best china and silverware. There are four red candles on the table, in glass candlesticks. Or are they red, white and blue candles, in pewter candlesticks? It doesn't matter. The favors are small candy hatchets, in the national colors. The fruit cup is already in place, in thin glass sherbet dishes. "Dinner is served!" announces the host.

Now I'll open my eyes, and go on with the menu. I have suggested Roast Pork because that's one kind of fresh meat you can get, whether you live in the city or in the country. Allow plenty of time for cooking all pork. Brown the roast quickly, all over, then reduce the heat, and cook, fat side up. Be sure the center of the roast is thoroughly cooked. If you have a fresh ham or shoulder, it is especially important to cook it long enough so that the roast will be well done clear to the center.

Our first vegetable dish is mashed sweet potatoes and turnips, each vegetable cooked and mashed separately, and then combined and seasoned. The recipe specialist, who suggested this combination dish, says the two vegetables, mashed, and then combined and seasoned, are very good. Our second vegetable dish is canned string beans.

The "Revolution" salad is simply tomatoes, fresh or canned, combined with mayonnaise, or any other dressing you like. Tomatoes in any form would have been a revolutionary addition to an early colonial menu. If fresh tomatoes are not available, let's have a canned tomato salad.

Select tomatoes which have kept their shape. Remove the pulp from the centers. Drain the juice from the pulp. Mix this tomato pulp with chopped green pepper, chopped celery, and salt. Moisten with salad dressing. Refill the tomatoes. Place on crisp lettuce leaves. Put a tablespoon of salad dressing on each tomato, and garnish with a circle of green pepper. If your canned tomatoes aren't solid enough for salad, I suggest that you make a Tomato Aspic salad.

Now what's next? Cherry Pie. I'll give you directions for cherry pie, and for cherry tarts. You can take your choice.

When you make a cherry pie -- oh, do you have pencils? (Read slowly.)

When you make a cherry pie, the first step is to bake an undercrust until it is delicately browned. Be careful not to let this crust become too brown, however, or it will be overcooked when the pie is baked. Strain the juice off of the canned cherries. If they are unsweetened, mix the needed quantity of sugar with about one-half tablespoon of cornstarch for each pie, and cook this with the cherry juice until it is thickened. Add one tablespoon of butter and a few grains of salt, stir in the fruit, and put this filling into the pre-baked pie crust. Moisten the rim, lay the top crust in place, and press the edges carefully together so that the juice will not leak out. Prick the top crust to allow the steam to escape. Bake the pie for about 20 minutes in a hot oven (450°F.), or until the upper crust is brown.

For cherry tarts, bake pastry shells on the outside of muffin pans, and fill with fruit mixture. Serve at once, or to give an extra touch, add a spoonful of whipped cream or cover with meringue made of a stiffly beaten white of egg, one tablespoon of sugar, a few grains of salt, and a drop or two of vanilla. To brown the meringue, return the tarts to a very slow oven for 15 to 20 minutes.

Serve the coffee with the main course, with the dessert, or after dinner.

Shall I repeat the menu? Fruit Cup; Roast Pork; Mashed Sweet Potatoes and Turnips; Canned String Beans; Cornbread; Applesauce or Cranberry Sauce; Revolution Salad; Cherry Pie; and Coffee.

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Monday "Thrifty Ways Around the House."